

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

IN SUPPORT of S.B. No. 241 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES, REVISING CERTAIN HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSE FEES AND REQUIRING REGISTRATION BY HUNTING AND FISHING GUIDE SERVICES.

by Robert T. Crook, Director.

02/28/14

The major component of this bill is Section 2 (d) which is an attempt to increase participation in hunting and fishing by decreasing the fee for any firearms hunting, archery hunting, trapping or sport fishing permit, tag or stamp by 50%, purchased by those seventeen and eighteen years of age. Current "Junior Licenses" are available for those 12 to 16.

We believe this fee adjustment will help promote new sportsmen participation, increase long-term revenues for the DEEP, and continue sound wildlife and fisheries management. For the last two decades sportsmen have seen substantial license fee increases, which have caused participation decreases in all age groups and combined with activities available to the new generations (Soccer, Computers, etc.) recruitment and retention of juniors has significantly suffered. Visiting sportsmen's clubs, shows, and events, one sees too many "Grey Beards" and few of the young generations. Without increased participation by new generations, who will be the future "field managers" taking excess populations to help conform to the ecological population balances DEEP is tasked by statute to achieve?

This proposal is a short term test to achieve its goal of new recruitment and is revenue neutral to the budget. But CT is not the only state recognizing the junior recruitment problem. Several states have initiated similar legislation and Massachusetts has passed FREE licenses for all teenagers.

Section 3 (a) of the bill concerning on-line education services is another positive example of DEEP outreach to recruit new hunters. However, there are mixed emotions from the 300+ Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Instructors (CE/FS) on the loss of personal contact, but a one day actual instructor contact teaching field safety/actual shooting instruction must also be included.

2 (c) The reduction in fee for a group fishing license, as described in subsection (h) of section 26-30, benefitting 501-c3 (Charitable) organizations that support persons service-related or other disability receiving services at the US Dept Veterans Affairs CT System, or receive mental health or addiction services from other State agencies. The group license is another option to increase participation, supports and services special groups and applies only to their marine and inland water fishing events.

Changes in licenses fees in section 2 (a), both increases and decreases, are to achieve cost balanced fees on resident combination licenses.

Section 4 addresses hunting and fishing guide services which have increased in the state.

We urge SUPPORT

Thank you